Here’s an overview of what’s happened so far… attached is trip report with my notes/impressions for more details on each of these areas below.

**Summary:**

1. Staff communications: getting better… I look less like the devil day by day
2. UNIMAK: tentative “yes” to being full partner… loads of concerns though…
3. USAID: spent 6-7 hours total with them so far… outcome seems good for now.
4. Ministries: Ag and Health happy with lab plan; unhappy with release of finding… political window has closed… major worry about election violence and disruption; trying to meet with Office of National Security.
5. SLA: won’t be easy or quick to change this…
6. Other meetings:
   a. CDC: happy UCD is in charge
   b. P&R: director hopes we’ll keep their office space in F/T, total rent is $24,000/yr… right now P&R pays nothing…they had their national roll out of the one health platform. Nice moment for the country.

Liz and David, I’ll be emailing you for some needed documents etc that various folks want to see, so we can get things going here…

-b
Trip Report: UCDavis – Metabiota Transition Sierra Leone
Brian Bird – June 2017

Major issues and discussions:

1) Staff Communications:
   a. **Monday 19 June**: Initial dinner with Prof Gbakima and James Bangura set things on the right track. After 2 hours, they understood some of why there was going to be a transition and that we were trying to do the best job we can for the project and the people. By the end of the 3rd hour we were on okay footing. Their main issue was that they did not fully understand until the phone call with Jonna that a transition was coming and that it was going to be absolute.
   b. **Wednesday 21 June**: Met with field staff in Makeni. Much anger and frustration. They had clearly been told something along the lines of get ready to be fired, the project is shutting down, or that UCD can’t be trusted etc... I was surprised by the level of frustration from the young folks. Fortunately, Prof and James vouched for me, and another guy Victor who works for Metabiota and who I was with in Kenema during the roughest part of the outbreak vouched for me as stand-up guy. That helped, but I did not win them over completely. They wanted absolute answers to questions like (are we all going to be hired, who will employ us, etc...) I did not have definitive answers at that point, so they didn’t like that. My reply was that I ain’t promising things that I don’t know if I could deliver. Eventually that line of reasoning helped...moderate success on this one...
   c. **Thursday 22 June**: Met with F/T staff. They were more accepting of the change. Messages had clearly been shared from Makeni to F/T.
   d. **Friday 23 June**: discussions with Prof and James on their contracts.

2) UNIMAK partnership: Tentative “Yes” to being full implementing partner
   a. **Wednesday (21 June)** met with representatives from UNIMAK (Head of Adminstration - Mercy Mwaura; Head of HR – Veronica; Registrar – Father Francis). FYI- UNIMAK is a Catholic University.
   b. Senior leadership (Chancellor and Vice-chancellor are in China, but have already been briefed on the transition and given tentative yes).
   c. **Main issues discussed:**
      i. **Staff**: they can absorb the staff, they are exploring how to best adapt their hiring process to smooth the process and reduce the screening process time and requirements. They have no issues with some staff living in FT and working for UNIMAK. Hiring timeline after candidate selection about 3-4 weeks.
      ii. **Procurement and logistics**: They don’t really have any capacity for this... willing to learn, but they are afraid their systems for purchasing (only ever purchased in-country supplies) can meet our needs. They suggested getting another organization to handle this part of the work.
      iii. **Administrative oversight**: Want to know exactly what is expected of them and what the SOW would be.
      iv. **Technical oversight**: concerned that they wouldn’t be able to give the technical oversight needed... I told them this would still reside within the PREDICT team. UNIMAK’s chief role would be administrative, not technical – except for the lab staff.
v. **Any other international projects:** Yes, they have had this type of arrangement with other international organizations before, but they have been much smaller than what our ask would be.

d. **What UNIMAK needs to begin:**
   i. Description of UC Davis and how we implement and partner with other Universities within PREDICT.
   ii. SOW and expectations and how will we ensure compliance
   iii. A conference call with someone from UCD who can discuss how these types of contracts/subawards work with UCD.
   iv. I offered up to let them chat with Prof Kazawala or someone else from the UCD-PREDICT network so that they could get an unbiased opinion on how we work and what we can bring to the table.
   v. List of personnel and qualifications – they need to figure out what job categories they need to have in place and if they can skip the vetting process for new hires so they don’t have to start at the absolute beginning of the hiring process.

3) **Mission Communications:**
   a. USAID-Washington Delegation and SL mission: I’ve met with them now 3 times, plus informal communications at various functions. Each of the 3 meetings was for about 2 hours.

   i. **Tuesday 20 June: Meeting at Radison Blu**
      1. Richard Greene, Kendra Chittenden, Robbin Boyer (Budget team lead), Dorothy Peprah from SL mission, Prof. James
      2. Extensive questioning on transition, plans for resumption of work and especially on laboratory testing.
      3. All seemed to be answered to satisfaction from what I could tell. Kendra came to our defense somewhat.
      4. I brought up budget uncertainties... (unfortunately Robbin had left the room)... Richard was adamant that all the money is coming... when I mentioned the details on the 4 million supplement etc it got fuzzy, so I’m not really sure what’s going on there... so I dropped it and moved on, never got to the CAPs issues etc.
      5. Brought up SLA issues... Richard offered to provide us a letter from USAID to help with the SLA transition to "vouch for us" etc... (we will need this... see below)
      6. Communications around finding: Richard said not to expect any action on the ground from the communications partners until 3-6 months down the road... sounds like they may be switching implementing partners in country, but they didn’t say.
      7. By end of meeting, I think that I had expressed the importance of PREDICT-SL within the GH5A context enough through the prism of what I saw here during the outbreak that Richard started to soften a bit. Lots of content to provide that laid on real-world context and that made an impact I think... or I’m a horrible judge of people... could go either way.

   ii. **Wednesday 21 June: Visit of delegation to Makeni – UNIMAK**
      1. About 15 people: Richard, Irene Koek (Global Health Bureau), Robbin Boyer (global budget team), Jeff Muschell (global ebola team), Kendra, Saad, Dorothy, Tesfy (FAO), and many others...
2. Prepped team for Laboratory visit, and met with Univ Cambridge staff Umaru Jah.

3. Lab visit/tour went well – stressed UNIMAK-Cambridge aspects. Umaru handled parts related to NGS platforms and Moynia (PREDICT staff) did most of the talking. She did well, but threw us under the bus on the lab training even though she had been briefed on the new plan... weird and something to watch out for with her... I know her from Kenema... not my favorite even then.
   a. Had a good moment with Richard and visiting team talking about testing modalities and how qRTPCR is a laser beam search diagnostic and that the PREDICT method is more of a spotlight... they got the point I think. And how we build more than push-button scientific capacity using our platform.

4. Gave 30 min presentation to the visiting team. James did an excellent job after some coaching and slides touchup the day prior.
   a. Big issues revealed in biosafety practices in some videos he wanted to show... got those removed and we showed some photos only.] After talking though those issues James was upset that his training from MB was so poor... he didn't know what he didn't know... the need for robust BS&S training is critical.

5. 30+ mins of excellent and supportive questions from Richard, Kendra, Dorothy during visit. Many centered from Richard on the behavioral work and targeted professions (hunters etc) and how to turn the data into action items for later communications efforts... and about other virus family testing.... He's keen to do arenas (Lassa fever v) ... 5 families be damned... probably appropriate on the rodents

iii. Thursday 22 June US Embassy: meeting of all USAID partners
   1. All USAID-Washing staff present, plus local mission
   2. All partners gave short 2-3 min presentations
   3. Final sit-down meeting with Dorothy, Kendra, Richard
      a. Richard: pleased and happy with what he has seen
      b. Dorothy: seems that things are on the right track
      c. Kendra: agreed.
      d. Richard:
         i. TESTING: When can in country testing begin? Answer: during/after the upcoming training... “when will the first results be generated in country?” Answer: during/after the upcoming training... with preliminary results to begin in August... confirmation will take a while longer... Kendra chimed in “and then those will be have to be cleared by GoSL before USAID has them”.
         ii. BEHAVIOR: When will the behavior results be analyzed? Answer: being transcribed now, then analyzed... full analysis pending probably end of year? RG: hope we have that info to help guide the discussions on findings communications especially as fits with certain occupations and risk interfaces.
iii. REPORTING: wants us to help create easy to digest reporting slides for him to report to NSC “the good work of PREDICT in GHSA”...
   1. Add picture vignettes with testimonials
   2. Diagrams of Animals to Specimens to results
   3. How we are leveraging training of PREDICT staff to enhance numbers of other GoSL etc trained staff.

iv. Thursday 22 June: Meeting with CDC Deputy Country director Laura Perone
   1. She’s an old friend
   2. Happy that we are transitioning, not much love for MB either
   3. Offered to assist us in whatever way we need.
   4. Gave a list of contacts for logistics companies and other customs clearance activities
   5. Will be a good point of contact for us in probably many unanticipated ways.
   6. Sarah Hersey – CDC Country director was out of the country so will catchup with her on next trip.

4) Ministries:
   a. 21 June: Min. Ag Forests Food Security (MAFFS)
      i. Drs. Kamara (chief vet officer), Dr. Leno epi-lead, Dr. Jalloh (asst. director of animal production)
      ii. Discussed transition and the new UCD leadership.
      iii. Very light and easy tone in the meeting.
      iv. Rolled out lab capacity plan and they agreed verbally that it looked good (confirmed by email later).
      v. Long discussion about finding: Not much change in opinion from “scientifically interesting – politically dead in the water”. Really interesting analogy given of how the teach children not to sit on the fire stones...
      vi. I stressed the importance of informing the public and how we are getting to a point when we will be blamed if something occurs. Also brought up the fact that others are looking and they won’t wait for the government to be prepared. We will, but we need action... this line of reasoning seemed to get some traction with them... thus far they are our closest allies in the release of the information... BUT they were also the farthest from the impacts of EVD on their professional work earlier....
      vii. They will send us the names of 2 persons for the lab training from TEKO.

b. Tuesday 20 June: MoHS Deputy Chief Medical Officer Dr. Jamba #2 career person in MoHS
   i. Had lunch with him after the US Mission marathon mentioned above...
   ii. He is very supportive of the project, the team, and the transition. No concerns with the lab plan or the other issues.
   iii. Did not have the chance to discuss the finding as we were in public.

c. Friday 23 June: MoHS Chief Medical Officer: Dr. Brima Kargbo – senior most career person in MoHS
   i. Morning meeting – introduced and explained transition
ii. He had no issues in principle with it once he understood that the project would remain intact as he had been understanding it.
iii. Extensive discussions around the finding: in no uncertain terms this is not to be publicly released until after the election.
   1. He was told that the President said “to take care of it, and he didn’t want to hear about it”.
   2. Stressed the need to start communications around animal contact and risk avoidance ASAP in the affected areas, but no details shared about the finding.
   3. Wants to keep this discussion about the finding among the scientists... not the public.
   4. Would not budge... he said that if the US Ambassador can’t get a meeting to discuss this then there is nothing we can do.

   d. **POTENTIAL MAJOR ISSUE**: Prof and James informed me later that they think he is UNAWARE of a publication submission apparently... as are the MAFFS folks.... Only Drs. Jambai (DCMO) and the Bombali district DMO are aware and on as authors.... Need to fix this... discussion with them later today (Friday 23 June)

5) **Service Level Agreement Officials (SLA)**
   a. Friday 23 June: Met with Yaya Contehe (Principal Health Partners Coordinator and Head of SLA team) after launch of One Health Platform in F/T.
      i. Not going to be easy to change SLA
         1. UC Davis must register as NGO in-country
         2. UNIMAK also must register as in-country service provider
            a. This takes a couple of months
            b. Extensive paperwork
      ii. After registration, we will need a new SLA
         1. Changing existing one won’t work
         2. Probably easier anyway to just make a new one rather than being tied with the old one.
         3. Before new one can be done... will need to make district level visits to ensure that work performed so far has been in accordance with the SLA
      iii. To start process:
         1. Send information describing UC Davis and leadership of PREDICT
         2. Describe why changing implementing partners
         3. Describe what changes if any to proposed scope of work
         4. Describe how UNIMAK is primary in-country partner and how that strengthens country.
         5. Send letter from UNIMAK agreeing to participate
         6. Send letter from USAID describing how project is ongoing and that UC DAVIS has always been the lead organization globally.

   b. Looking at 3-6 month delay easily...
      i. Only way to continue operations is under MB until new SLA is approved...

6) **Other meetings:**
   a. P&R: Roll out and launch of the National One Health Platform this week
      i. Met with Susan Scribner (Director P&R) and Serge Nzietcheung (West Africa Regional lead)
1. They share office space here in MB palace in F/T
2. Met to touch base and discuss the one health platform and thank Prof and James for their help in the discussions and buildup of the program.